

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 VO-05 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 CA-01 /057 W
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5969
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY
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PORT MORESBY PASS TO ASST. SECRETARY HOLBROOKE

INS/CORAP PASS TO COEXM

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: MEETING ON VIETNAMESE BOAT REFUGEE, JULY 3, 1978
AT UNHCR REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EAST SOUTH ASIA, KUALA LUMPUR

1. MEETING CHAIRED BY UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE FOR EAST
SOUTH ASIA SAMPATKUMAR, HELD ON JULY 3, 1978.

ATTENDEES INCLUDED CHIEFS OF MISSION OR CHARGES OF
AUSTRALIA, BELGIUM, UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE, FRG,
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ITALY, THE NETHERLANDS, SWEDEN, SINGAPORE, SWITZERLAND,
THAILAND AND USA. REPRESENTATIVES FROM AUSTRIA,
CANADA, INDONESIA, JAPAN, KOREA, NEW ZEALAND AND
THE PHILIPPINES WERE PRESENT AS WELL. IN ADDITION
TO AMBASSADOR, MR. LOWMAN OF HA/ORM AND MR. FRIEDMAN
OF EA BUREAU, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, PARTICIPATED AS
U.S. REPRESENTATIVES.

2. OUTLINING MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION, MR. SAMPATKUMAR NOTED BACKGROUND OF INDOCHINESE BOAT REFUGEE PROBLEM FROM ITS BEGINNING IN 1975 TO PRESENT. COMMENTING ON GLOBAL STATISTICS HE POINTED OUT THAT BY END OF JUNE, 1977, 11,420 BOAT REFUGEES SOUGHT ASYLUM IN 22 COUNTRIES. BY JANUARY OF 1978, THAT FIGURE HAD INCREASED TO 20,449. FIGURE HAS SUBSEQUENTLY AGAIN INCREASED OVER PAST SIX MONTHS TO 40,500 PERSONS.

3. UNHCR BRIEF, TO BE POUCHED TO ALL ADDRESSES, FURTHER NOTED BULK OF INCREASE IN VIETNAMESE BOAT CASES HAS OCCURRED IN MALAYSIA, WHICH HAS GRANTED TEMPORARY ASYLUM TO TWO-THIRDS (13,219) OF MORE THAN 20,000 BOAT REFUGEES GENERATED OVER PAST SIX MONTHS. THOUGH DEPARTURES TO COUNTRIES OF PERMANENT RESETTELEMENT HAVE DOUBLED OVER PAST SIX MONTHS TO AVERAGE OF 978 PER MONTH, IT WAS EMPHASIZED THAT ARRIVALS DURING SAME PERIOD AVERAGED 2203 PERSONS PER MONTH. CURRENT CASELOAD OF UNRETTLED REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA STANDS AT 11,899 AS OF END OF JUNE.

4. UNHCR REP STATED THAT THOUGH OFFICIAL POLICY OF GOM IS NOT TO ACCEPT, EVEN TEMPORARILY, ANY VIETNAMESE IN COUNTRY, LOCAL OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO EXERCISE DISCRETION AND MOST VIETNAMESE HAVE BEEN ALLOWED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO LAND AS IN PAST. FREQUENCY WHICH SUBJECT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES RAISED IN LOCAL CONTEXT AND IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, HE SAID, REFLECTS GRAVITY OF PROBLEM IMPOSED ON GOM. URGENT NEED FOR CONCERTED ACTION IN FINDING RESETTLEMENT FOR INCREASING NUMBER OF REFUGEES, MORE SPEEDILY THAN HERETOFORE, WAS STRESSEX.

5. SAMPATKUMAR REVIEWED IN-CAMP SITUATION AND REPORTED EXPANSION OF FACILITIES AT PULAU TENGAH AND POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL CAMP ON ISLAND TWELVE MILES OFF TRENGGANU COAST. UNHCR HAS ALLOCATED US\$1 MILLION FOR CARE OF REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA FOR LAST SIX MONTHS OF 1978. TO COPE WITH INCREASING ARRIVALS, THREE UNHCR OFFICERS NOW OPERATE SUB-OFFICES ON MALAYSIAN EAST COAST. THEY ARE SUPPORTED BY THREE OTHER REFUGEE OFFICERS AT KUALA LUMPUR HEADQUARTERS.

6. SAMPATKUMAR CONCLUDED WITH A PLEA FOR ACCELERATED OUTFLOW, TO LEVEL ACCEPTABLE TO GOM, OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM MALAYSIA. THIS, HE

SAID, WILL REQUIRE A MUCH WIDER PARTICIPATION OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN OVERALL RESETTLEMENT EFFORT. HE STRESSED THAT FAILURE TO ACCOMPLISH THIS COULD RESULT IN GOM'S ADOPTION OF STERN MEASURES TO DISSUADE FURTHER LANDINGS OF REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA.

7. COMMENTING ON OPENING REMARKS, US AMBASSADOR MILLER REVIEWED NEW U.S. PAROLE PROGRAM AND NOTED THAT BULK OF PROGRAM'S BOAT NUMBERS COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE ALLOTTED TO MALAYSIA. RECENT US ALLOCATION OF US\$3 MILLION TO UNHCR FUND ALSO NOTED. AMBASSADOR STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF BROADER APPROACH TO REFUGEE PROBLEM AND MOVED THAT USG LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS SEEKING NEW REFUGEE LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD TREAT REFUGEE PROBLEM ON A LONG-TERM BASIS.

8. MR. LOWMAN THEN EMPHASIZED THAT PRESENT US PROGRAM IS PART OF CONTINUING US EFFORT TO DEAL WITH BOAT REFUGEE PROBLEM. THOUGH PAROLE OF 25,000 IS INTERIM MEASURE, IT IS OUR INTENT TO FOLLOW THIS WITH PERMANENT LEGISLATION. PRESENT PROBLEM WAS SUMMARIZED AS, AT WHAT RATE CAN PRESENT CASELOAD BE MOVED BY ALL PARTICIPATING RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS AND WILL THAT RATE ACCOMMODATE ARRIVALS TO SATISFACTION OF GOM. IN THIS VEIN, AMBASSADOR MILLER COMMENTED THAT JUNE DEPARTURES OF 850 REFUGEES SET NEW US PROGRAM HIGH.

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5970

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
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9. AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER EXPRESSED GRATITUDE THAT UNHCR-HOSTED MEETING SERVICES TO HIGHLIGHT THE CRUX OF REFUGEE PROBLEM: GOM'S HERETOFORE ENLIGHTENED ASYLUM PRACTICES WILL COME UNDER SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE AS NUMBERS OF PERSONS IN COUNTRY WITHOUT ONGOING RESETTLEMENT OFFERS CLIMBS TO 15,000 BY END OF 1978. HE SAID THAT AUSTRALIANS HAVE STEPPED UP DEPARTURES FROM MALAYSIA TO CURRENT RATE OF 600 PER MONTH. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT DIRECT ARRIVALS IN AUSTRALIA NAD
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SAID THAT TEMPORARY ASYLUM MUST BE GRANTED IF AUSTRALIAN PROCESSING COULD FUNCTION IN AN ORDERLY MANNER TO SPARE REFUGEES PERILOUS VOYAGES TO DARWIN.

10. SAMPATKUMAR NOTED THAT ALL PRIOR FLOW PROJECTIONS HAD FALLEN SHORT OF ACTUAL ARRIVALS AND THAT PRESENT FLOW WOULD, THEREFORE, PROBABLY CONTINUE FOR MONTHS TO COME. MR. LOWMAN COMMENTED THAT RECENT RESEARCH INTO FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FLOW INDICATES THAT WHILE SRV EFFORTS TO PREVENT ESCAPES FROM VIETNAM CONTINUE, DESPERATION AMONG ESCAPEES IS ON THE RISE. SMALLER, MORE INADEQUATELY PROVISIONED VESSELS ARRIVE WITH GREATER FREQUENCY THAN BEFORE. PIRACY, VICTIMIZING BOAT REFUGEES,

IS A COMMONLY RELATED STORY. WORSENING SEASONAL WEATHER CONDITIONS ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO HAZARDS OF VOYAGE. WHETHER THESE FACTORS

WILL COMBINE TO DISSUADE ALL BUT MOST DETERMINED ESCAPEES IS, FOR PRESENT, A MATTER OF CONJECTURE. LOWMAN CONCLUDED THAT WE WILL KNOW BETTER AFTER THREE OR FOUR MONTHS WHETHER RECENT HIGH ARRIVAL RATE IS IN DEED A BULGE IN FLOW OR IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE.

11. AGAIN, COMMENTING ON FLOW, SAMPATKUMAR NOTED THAT WHILE ARRIVALS IN MALAYSIA DROPPED TO ABOUT 2700 REFUGEES IN JUNE, OTHER PORTS OF ASYLUM, HONG KONG MOST NOTABLY, HAD EXPERIENCED DRASTIC UPSURGES IN ARRIVALS.

12. AS OTHER NATIONS REVIEWED THEIR ONGOING CONFIDENTIAL

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PROGRAMS, CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVES STATED THAT THEIR PROGRAM OF ACCEPTING 50 BOAT CASES PER MONTH FROM REGION IS ONGOING PROGRAM WITH NO TERMINATION DATE. FRENCH AND GERMAN CHARGES NOTED GRAVITY OF PRESENT SITUATION THOUGH THEY EXPRESSED NO OPTIMISM IN TERMS OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASING ACCEPTANCES OF BOAT REFUGEES FROM REGION. SWITZERLAND AND NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVES NOTED SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR MODEST INCREASES IN ACCEPTANCES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE PROGRAMS BUT WERE QUITE GUARDED IN TONE.

13. ASEAN REPRESENTATIVES HAD NO FURTHER DETAILS ON ASEAN DESIRES TO DISCUSS REFUGEE PROBLEM AS EXPRESSED AT RECENT ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE AT PATTAYA.

14. MR. SAMPATKUMAR REMARKED THAT UNHCR WOULD SOON BE IN RECEIPT OF NOTE FROM ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS URGING HIGH COMMISSIONER ON REFUGEES TO REDOUBLE EFFORTS TO MAXIMIZE INTERNATIONALIZATION IN DEALING WITH REFUGEE PROBLEM.. AMBASSADOR MILLER THEN SAID THAT REFUGEE PROBLEM WILL BE ON AGENDA OF US-ASEAN DIALOGUE SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST, 1978.

15. AMBASSADOR THEN RAISED QUESTION OF BROADER INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE WITH DISCUSSIONS IN-DEPTH, AT HIGHER LEVEL, TO DRAMATIZE NEED FOR LONG-RANGE SOLUTION OF BOAT REFUGEE PROBLEMS. SAMPATKUMAR PERSONALLY ENDORSED SUGGESTION OF FURTHER INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATION AND SUGGESTED US AND AUSTRALIA MIGHT BRING UP

ISSUE AT UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IN GENEVA
IN CONTEXT OF REPORT TO UN HIGH COMMISSIONER
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
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FOR REFUGEES. AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER
ALSO SUPPORTED US SUGGESTION FOR BROADER
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. SAMPAKUMAR FURTHER
SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY OF SUB-COMMITTEE ON
THIS SUBJECT TO INCLUDE INTERESTED MEMBERS OF
UNHCR EXCOMM PLUS ASEAN COUNTRIES, WHO

SAMPATKUMAR BELIEVES LIKELY TO ATTEND NEXT
EXCOMM MEETING.

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16. COMMENT: MEETING CLOSED ON CORDIAL IF
INCONCLUSIVE NOTE. AUSTRALIANS NOTED
SATISFACTION WITH UNHCR RECENT MEASURES TO
DEAL WITH LOCAL PROBLEMS CONCERNING BOAT
REFUGEES. U.S. REPRESENTATIVES EX-
PRESSED HOPE THAT GROWING DIMENSIONS OF
REFUGEE PROBLEM WOULD BE BROUGHT HOME TO
RESPECTIVE FOREIGN MINISTRIES OF NATIONS
ATTENDING EETINGS. IT WAS GENERALLY
AGREED THAT CURRENT REFUGEE PROGRAMS NOW
IMPLEMENTED BY U.S., AUSTRALIA, FRANCE AND
CANADA, WHICH EFFECT MORE THAN 95 PER CENT
OF DEPARTURES FROM MALAYSIA, ARE INADEQUATE
TO COPE WITH CURRENT REFUGEE FLOW AND FURTHER
EFFORTS WILL BE NEEDED IF IT REMAINS AT THE
RECENT HIGH LEVEL, OTHRWISE, A CRISIS
RESULTING IN SUBSTANTIAL LOSS OF HUMAN LIFE
COULD BE PRECIPITATED.
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